



PSC NEWS

Missouri Public Service Commission

Contact: Kevin Kelly

Phone: (573) 751-9300

Governor Office Building, Suite 900

FY-05-233

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JUNE 28, 2005

PSC RESTORES RELAY MISSOURI SURCHARGE TO ENSURE SERVICES FOR DEAF, HARD OF HEARING AND SPEECH IMPAIRED

JEFFERSON CITY--The Missouri Public Service Commission has returned the monthly Relay Missouri surcharge to its 1992 level of 13 cents, effective September 1, 2005. The surcharge, currently 10 cents a month per telephone line, appears on monthly telephone bills, and funds telephone access for the deaf, hard of hearing and speech impaired.

"Our goal is to make sure that all Missourians have access to phone service," said PSC chairman Jeff Davis. "The new captioned telephone technology enhances the lives of those who may be hard of hearing and is more cost efficient than traditional deaf relay services. Restoring the surcharge to its 1992 level ensures telephone access to the deaf, hard of hearing and speech impaired," Davis said.

In its decision, the Commission acknowledged that the program's monthly revenues are lagging behind monthly distributions. If the current trend continued and the surcharge was not adjusted, the fund would have a deficit balance by April 2006.

The Missouri Assistive Technology Advisory Council distributes telephone equipment for Relay Missouri. As part of its order, the Commission encouraged the council to educate subscribers regarding the costs associated with both captioned telephone and traditional relay services.

Background: Since 1990, Relay Missouri has provided a vital link in making telephone services available to thousands of Missourians who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired. 7-1-1 is the statewide telephone relay number that connects voice users with deaf, hard of hearing and speech impaired individuals who use either a text telephone (TT) or a captioned telephone. When placing a call to 7-1-1, a person who is deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired uses his or her telephone device to communicate, through a specially trained assistant, with any other party.

The Missouri General Assembly enacted legislation in 1990 requiring the Public Service Commission to determine the most beneficial and cost-effective method of implementing a statewide dual party relay system. Missouri law requires the Commission to review the monthly surcharge no less frequently than every two years but no more than annually to ensure adequate funding exists to operate the program.